

SOME WORKS OF MODERN BUDDHIST ART IN THE HERMITAGE COLLECTION

The Hermitage collection houses various artifacts of contemporary Buddhist art: bronze sculpture, painting (thangka), ritual objects and works by contemporary artists — either made using traditional techniques, or featuring Buddhist themes. Many works by Buddhist artists remain anonymous to this day, i. e. the artists deliberately refrained from signing their names, thereby creating divine image in order to facilitate the spiritual growth of others (in this context, the artists' name didn't have any particular value). Museum collection also includes original works by contemporary artists: Dasha Namdakova, E. Zonhoyeva, T. Kryzhanovskaya, as well as by Tibetan artist Lhadri Thubten Dorje Tsering.

The lost-wax technique is still used in Nepal for sculpture making. Nevar masters were particularly famous; their families handed down the art of sculpture making from generation to generation. Hermitage collection includes sculptures, painting and ritual objects (36 in total) made in the end of 1970s. The collection of Nepali works of art was compiled by the Soviet medical doctor I. M. Kozlov who was working in this country. His collection includes various styles of sculpture: the imitation of earlier Tibetan and Nepali designs, as well as modern works.

Avalokiteśvara (inv. num. KO-1426, height 31.5 cm) and Amitābha (inv. No. KO-1496, height 31,5 cm) statues are made in contemporary Nepal style. Amitābha is surrounded by the mandorla of flowers and leaves, symbolizing his pure land of Sukhavati (pl. 20). There is an XVIII century group of Medicine Buddhas with a similar mandorla; these group is in Lhasa in Norbulingka palace (founded in 1754) [Tibet, p. 563]. His iconography is traditional: Amitābha sits in the diamond pose (vajrāsana) on the single lotus throne. His hands are clasped in meditation gesture (dhyana mudra). The sculpture is inlaid with semi-precious stones.

Avalokiteśvara's body has a slightly unnatural S-curve, despite the fact that this iconography should feature him on straight legs (samapada pose), as well as the disproportionally high heads. He has eleven heads and eight hands. The palms of his main hands are clasped in front of his chest in an offering gesture (añjali mudrā) and hold a jewel. The second hand to the right holds a string of beads, the third one has chinamani (instead of chakra), and the fourth hand holds a shell (instead of varada mudrā gesture). The second hand to the left holds a lotus, the third one — bow and arrow, and the fourth hand has a water vessel (kundika). On the torso, there is a plate with an image of dragon. The sculpture is inlaid

with semi-precious stones. Both these sculptures have small casting flaws, as well as deformations used to produce an “antique” impression.

There is an unusual — though made in classical style — sculpture of Mahāmāyā, mother of Buddha (inv. № KO-1502, height 52,5 cm), who is depicted as a thirty two armed goddess mounted on Garuda. Her crown features a miniature image of four-armed Vishnu surrounded by the hood of snakes. Her main hands hold phurpa and a bell; other hands are folded in the varada mudra gesture. The sculpture is inlaid with semi-precious stones and pearls. Traditionally, such iconography of Mahāmāyā does not exist, but I. M. Kozlov commissioned this image from an artist who chose to adorn her with these attributes. Of course, the addition of diamantes and complex iconography attract attention — presumably, such sculptures sell better.

The sculptures of Ahcala (inv. No. KO-1497, height 27,5 cm) and tantric Hayagriva (inv. No. KO-1429, height 29 cm) are made in a classic manner (pl. 21). They have well defined proportions; even the form of the thrones copy the classic Nepali artistic tradition which is most strikingly expressed in the XV—XVI century works of Malla dynasty (1200—1768)*.

Achala is depicted in traditional iconography: he is standing on a lotus throne, trampling two Hindu deities in achalasana poses. He holds a sword in his right hand and a lasso in his left. The artist followed Tibetan tradition and used gold plating only on some details. The statue is inlaid with turquoise, small details are carefully worked. The figure is full of dynamics and expression.

Hayagriva stands on a double lotus throne, in a Yab-Yum union, trampling with his legs four Hindu deities. He has three faces and six arms. He is holding lotus and kapala in his main hand; an elephant skin in his upper hands; middle hands attributes are lost, these hands are spread apart in a threatening gesture — karana mudra. The prajna's attributes are kapala and kartrika. The sculpture has finely elaborate details, gilding, embossing, engraving; all back side is worked up, like in old sculptures.

The sculpture of Ganesha (inv. No. KO-1430, height 43,3 cm) is made in Nepali style (pl. 22). There is no gilding. The figure of Ganesha is surrounded by double a jour mandorla: the inner part is decorated with four-petal rosettes, the outer one — with the tongues of flame. He is standing on double lotus throne, trampling a lion with one leg, and a rat with another. Ganesha has ten arms and four heads, his heads are adorned with crowns; the right hands are holding a hammer, a goad, a scepter and a radish; the main arm is held in favour giving gesture (varada mudra). In his left hands he holds an axe, a flower, kundika vessel, and a plate

* The Malla dynasty is divided in two periods: Malla proper (1200—1479) and three kingdoms of Malla (1480—1768), after one ruler divided the whole territory between his three sons.

of sweets, and he embraces the prajna who is standing next to him. The prajna's hands are folded in gestures of varada mudra and abhaya mudra (representing protection or peace). This sculpture is characterized by a relatively simple work, without elaborate details, as well as the lack of Ganesha's fat belly*. Elongated figures are characteristic of Nepal plastic arts between XIX and XX centuries.

Eight lamas form an unusual sculpture group (inv. No. KO-1431 a-z, height 12,5 cm). They belong to Nyingmapa school, popular in Nepal. Nyingmapa association is determined by their headwear ending with falcon feather. According to legends, such headwear was worn by Padma-sambhava, a founder of this school. All lamas have different attributes (seashell, book, small drums, trumpets, timpani, tam-tam and bell), they represent a ritual meeting of lamas.

Ritual objects include incense burners. One of them is made as a supported vessel with hands and a lid (inv. No. KO-1501, height 35 cm), two others are cast as lion figures (inv. No. KO-1422, 1423, height 38,5 cm) which is a very form in Nepal.

The collection includes a handheld prayer wheel (inv. No. KO-1498, height 43 cm), kartrika (inv. No. KO-1427, height 17,5 cm.) and phurpa (inv. No. KO-1428, height 25 cm).

Both kapalas (inv. No. KO-1637, 1651, height 27 and 22 cm) and damaru (inv. No. KO-1652, height 17,5 cm) are now generally made for sale. They were gifted to the Hermitage by Sergey Bugayev, an artist and a musician known under his pseudonym "Africa".

Paintings are also interesting: they can be divided into thangkas (or paubhas in Nepali tradition) and oil paintings.

The thangka depicts four-faced Mañjuśrī with prajna (inv. No. KO-1416, size 41,5×57 cm), his body is blue, hers — red. He has eight arms; main arms hold a bell and a vajra, left hands hold a sword, a goad and an arrow. In his left hands he is holding a lotus with a book, a lasso and a bow. Prajna holds her right hand in varada-mudra gesture; her left hand holds a lotus. The deities sit on a lotus throne, which, in turn, rests on the back of snow line, the mount (vahana) of Mañjuśrī.

Overall, this thangka is painted in classical Tibetan New Menri style, it has a lot of gold and includes landscape elements: mountains, waterfalls and clouds. One unusual feature of this thangka is that it is painted on paper, and the iridescence (i. e., the two strips which are usually serve

* Fat, round belly in Buddhist tradition is, on the one hand, determined by an iconographical canon for dharmapals and lesser deities; on the other hand, it is a symbol of well-being and affluence. In Indian tradition, Ganesha is venerated as a patron god of wealth and a protector of thieves. According to a popular belief, stroking Ganesha's belly every day would make one rich. Ganesha does not have a belly, because this form was used to pray for the prevention of hunger. This deity is venerated by Buddhist and Hindu.

as a part of araming), is here painted and decorated by floral and cloud motives. There are some XIX century thangkas from Inner Mongolia, where artists used the similar technique. But Mongol thangkas had both strips decorated with a cloud motif.

Another paubha depicts the famous Svayambhunath stupa, the second largest and most important stupa of Nepal (inv. No. KO-1419, size 57 × 106 cm). Buddha's eyes of wisdom are painted on the stupa's harmika. At the upper part, we can see the depiction of Buddha Akshobhya, below — Prajñā-pāramitā and Avalokiteśvara Shadakshari; around the stupa there are four wrathful protectors; two images of Avalokiteśvara form the stupa's centre. The iconography of Avalokiteśvara is rather unusual, but the thangka contains three of his images.

Overall, phaubhas are rather traditional, but the landscape lacks high mountains and depicts pronouncedly high grass. The whole lower part of the thangka is covered with images of various wedding rituals. Presumably, this thangka served as a wedding gift. The tradition to give paubhas as wedding gifts is widespread in Nepal. Similar paubha is kept in Korean collection [Art of Tibet, p. 102]. This thangka has only one framing strip painted in, which is filled with a floral motif. Framings of thangka — usually sewn from silk — are also very interesting. One framing is made of purple silk with the woven motif of clouds and dragons. Buddhist symbols are woven with golden thread; the framing is adorned with six silver coins which circulated in Nepal since 1817 till 1911 [Moshnya-gin, Zhuk, p. 75, 202]. One of them has wooden carved frame which is itself a work of art.

Despite hundreds of years past since the Epic of Gesar was created, this cycle and its hero retain their popularity among Central Asian peoples. His depictions made in Tibetan-Chinese style became widespread both in sculpture and painting. Works of art in State Hermitage collection and other museums show the worship of Gesar. The reverence towards this character is demonstrated by one event of the Hermitage's history.

In 2007 Tibetan artist Lhadri Thubten Dorje Tserin donated to the State Hermitage one more depiction of Gesar (inv. No. KO-1671). The artist Lhadri Thubten Dorje Tserin was born in 1974, in the year of Wood Tiger, in Dema district in Eastern Tibet. His father belonged to the Dri-Kho family of the king of Namje Ling province (on his father's side), and his mother belonged to the royal family descended from Gesar Lin, Lincho Gyaltsen of Lin Tsang province.

When the boy was eight years old, his parents sent him to a monastery school, to learn writing and philosophy; when he was twelve, Thubten Dorje began his studies in Dzongo monastery (Lin Tsang). Until eighteen years old, he studied main monastery disciplines: rituals, philosophy, history of Buddhism, dancing, playing musical instruments for monastery services, etc.

From the age of eighteen till twenty one, he undertook three year seclusion in Drubde Pema Olin center; after finishing it, he spent two years in Gava (Kham) district, to Dorje Tsegyal, a master of Karma Gadri painting style.

In 1996, while making a pilgrimage in Tibet, Nepal and India, he entered Shechen Tennyi Dargyeling monastery in Kathmandu (Nepal), where during four years he studied Karma Gadri icon painting under Master Lobpon Konchoka (a close pupil and personal artist of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche). After finishing his studies, he participated in the painting of Shechen monastery in Shechen monastery in Bodhgaya (India).

In 2001, Lhadri Thubten Dorje Tserin opened his own studio workshop in Nepal. All works are made in strict compliance to the core texts of Buddhism, and to the rules of Buddhist iconography. Under the master's careful and strict supervision, artists and pupils are constantly improving their skill.

The thangka was painted in 2005; it is made in traditional style on canvas (canvas size is 56×42 cm) and has silk framing (size with framing is 116×73 cm). It depicts Gesar as a horse rider. In his right hand he is holding a whip, in his left — a rod with a flaming sword as a pommel. A lasso is wound round his left wrist. The horse rider wears traditional Tibetan armour and helm. Various animals, birds and fish are painted inside the mandorla (an iridescent shining around the image of deity). The thangka is made in Tibetan Karma Gadri style and is an interesting work of art demonstrating the preservation of tradition of Gesar worship [Yelikhina, 2009, p. 193–194].

Buryat thangkas belong to the collection of the famous orientalist B. I. Pankratov (1892–1979). His collection included old thangkas, as well as those painted specially for him in the middle of XX century. I want to present two typical examples of the last ones. One of the thangkas depicts the White Tara (inv. No. KO-1604, size 29×33 cm), the other — Milarepa (inv. No. KO-1610, size 23×29,5 cm). White Tara is painted in the Buryat style of the beginning of XX century. She is shown according to the traditional iconography: the goddess sits on the lotus throne in vajrasana pose, her right hand is folded in varada mudra gesture; her left hand holds a lotus flower. Flanged edges of the clouds are particularly distinctive. Paint hues and some minor details show that this thangka was painted in the middle of XX century.

The second thangka depicts Milarepa (1040–1123), a hermit poet, in his traditional iconography: he sits in a free pose (*rajalilasana*) before the cave entrance on a wild boar's hide (pl. 23). He has long hair and holds his right hand near his ear, to better hear the space and his own voice singing the hymns. According to another interpretation, he is pressing a certain channel on his neck, to harmonise the flows of energies. In his left hand he holds *kapala*. The hunter is accompanied by a dog. If modernist style existed in Tibetan art, this work depicting Milarepa could have been classified as such. Pronounced sharp mountain peaks, banana

trees, grey-green figure with the sky of the same colour as a background, unnatural body tilt — all these features make this thangka particularly interesting. The fact that it is a part of the State Hermitage collection, which has almost no works of XX century Buryat art, shows the existence of unbroken Buddhist tradition of painting in Buryatia [Yelikhina, 2012, p. 628—629].

Today many artists paint thangkas. Our Saint-Petersburg artists, Mikhail and Tatyana Kryzhanovsky, donated to the Hermitage two thangkas depicting Yab-Yum with Mahākāla and Lhamo (inv. No. KO-1645, size 28,5×37 cm) and Guru Dragpo (inv. No. KO-1676, size 47,5×62,5 cm). These works are painted in nagtan technique, in Tibetan tradition, observing all canons.

Lhamo and Mahākāla are sitting on a mule. The deities are adorned with skulls, their bodies are blue. Lhamo's attributes are kapala and kartrika. Mahākāla has four arms holding mirror, trident, snake and phurba. The deities are surrounded by the flames of fire, the sea of blood, mountains and clouds. Two birds are circling above him; the lower part of thangka depicts kapalas with offerings.

Guru Dragpo is one of the wrathful manifestations of Padmasambhava. In this form he is depicted as wrathful deity with a red body; he holds vajra in his right hand, and a scorpion in his left.

The works of Buryat sculptor, graphic artist and jeweler Dashi Nimdakov possess strong individual artistic features. His sculpture "Little Buddha" decorates one of the datsans. His works often depict Buddhist subjects and historical figures. The sculpture "Ritual" (inv. No. KO-1674, height 30 cm) depicts a lama blowing the trumpet. Such actions always take place during the Buddhist religious service. Namdakov imparted the lama with Buryat facial features. According to Buddhist tradition, the lama stands on a round lotus throne typical for an enlightened person. "The Guardian" (inv. No. KO-1646, height 33 cm) depicts the mythical bird Garuda*. Both sculptures were cast in 2001 [Dashi, ill. 11, 26].

The picture by E. Zonhoyeva "Buddhist Paradise" (inv. No. KO-1670, height 110×150 cm) depicts one of the pure lands. This picture was painted in 2002. The author is very knowledgeable about Buddhist symbolism and landscape elements: shapes of mountains, waterfalls, rainbows, flowers, vegetation, lotus petals which she includes in her oil painted canvas. In this way, the artist blends her understanding with the techniques of European and Tibetan traditions.

* Garuda is worshiped as a protector bird fighting Naga snakes; it came to Buddhism from Hindu mythology, where it is a mount (vahana) of the god Vishnu. In Vajrayana Buddhism, Garuda is also worshiped as an idam, one of the symbols of an enlightened mind. Garuda is considered to be the guardian of Mongolian sacred mountain Bogd Uul located to the south from the modern city of Ulan Bator, and it is depicted on the city's coat of arms.

In this manner, artists continue to create traditional Buddhist sculpture, painting and ritual objects. Our times bring certain adjustments: there are more individual auteur and signed works, new materials and techniques are used, portrait tradition becomes more widespread.

Yelikhina Yu. I. Obrazy Gesera iz kollektsii Gosudarstvennogo Ermitaja // Buddiyskaya kultura: istoriya, istochnikovedeniye, yazykoznaniye i isskusstvo: Tretyi Dorzhiyevskiy chteniye (Images of Gesar in the State Hermitage Collection // Buddhist Culture: History, Source Studies, Linguistics and Art: The Third Dorzhiev Conference). St. Petersburg, 2009. P. 188–194.

Yelikhina Yu. I. Obrazy Milarepy iz kollektsii Gosudarstvennogo Ermitaja // Buddizm Vajrayany v Rossii: Ot kontaktov k vzaimodeystviyu (Images of Milarepa in the State Hermitage Collection // Vajrayana Buddhism in Russia: From Contacts to Interactions). M., 2012. P. 617–629.

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REJUVENATION OF BUDDHIST ART AND PRACTICE IN INDIA

The first Buddhist chisels probably resonated across Ajanta's horse-shoe-shaped stone ravine sometime in the second century BC, followed by a number of caves like Ellura, Bhaja, Karla, Bedsa, Pithalkhora and many others and a vast number of sculptures and stupas. The beginnings may be traced to the Kalinga war when having come out victorious Emperor Ashoka, instead of celebrating his success, deeply regretted the bloodshed and looked on violence with abhorrence. He devoted himself to Dharma and his mission was to spread Buddhism in and outside India. He divided the relics, commissioned stupas for them, and got caves, capitals and sculptures erected. During the Maurya, Shunga, Andhra, Kushan, Gupta, medieval periods in north and the Pala period in east, India witnessed the beauty of art, architecture, sculpture, paintings, writing and lively practice of Buddhism. The Land of the Buddha shone in full glory. Buddhism became interwoven with Hindu practices and it influenced art as well. In the twelfth century, when Islam attacked north India, Hindu culture was taken aback,



20.

Амитабха

Непал. 1970-е гг.

Государственный Эрмитаж, Санкт-Петербург

Amitabha

Nepal. 1970's

State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg



21.

Ачала
Непал. 1970-е гг.
Государственный Эрмитаж, Санкт-Петербург

Achala.
Nepal. 1970's
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg



22.

Ганеша

Непал. 1970-е гг.

Государственный Эрмитаж, Санкт-Петербург

Ganesha

Nepal. 1970's

State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg



23.

Миларепа

Тханка. Бурятия. Сер. XX в.

Государственный Эрмитаж, Санкт-Петербург

Milarepa

Thangka. Buryatia. Mid-20th cent.

State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg